

NewsExtra

3 May 2024

AIS ACT Independent Schools – Now's the Time

The IEU expects bargaining for new multi-enterprise agreements (MEAs) for teachers and professional, administrative and operational staff in independent schools to commence in May. We will be consulting with members about developing our claim in the first four weeks of Term 2.

Now's the time

The IEU is developing claims for both teacher and professional, administrative and operational staff MEAs. Our members deserve a better deal, and employers must:

- restore the pay premium for teachers in independent schools
- provide a fair deal for professional, administrative and operational staff
- address teacher workloads
- improve paid parental leave in line with industry standards and pay superannuation on paid parental leave
- guarantee fair processes.

Restore the pay premium for teachers in independent schools

Following the unprecedented pay increases in ACT government and Catholic systemic schools in 2023, some independent schools agreed to extra pay increases above the MEA rates. However, the additional increases were often quite small and other schools did not increase pay rates at all. Most independent schools now pay teachers less than government and Catholic systemic schools and others only just above (see teachers' pay comparison, [click here](#)). So much for the premium (about 5%-7%) traditionally enjoyed by teachers in AIS schools! Fair MEA pay rates remain crucial for members in all schools.

A better deal for professional, administrative and operational staff

Similarly, we are seeking to ensure that professional, administrative and operational staff under the *Independent Schools ACT (Support and Operational Staff) MEA* continue to be paid comparably to their colleagues working in ACT Catholic systemic and government schools.

Conditions are also less than those that apply in Catholic schools – long service leave and personal/carer's leave should be improved.

Addressing teacher workloads

The ACT Government, TQI, the federal government and many Catholic school employers have acknowledged the workload pressures both new teacher graduates and experienced teachers face. However, independent schools fail to recognise the extent of the problem and refuse to take coordinated measures to reduce teacher workloads, or even meet with the union on this issue.

The IEU is calling on independent schools to agree to the following:

- establishment of school-based committees to identify measures to reduce workloads
- school-based standards on face-to-face teaching hours, release time, the number of meetings, duties, extras, and expected days of attendance including at weekends, recognising that excessive workload is a WHS issue
- ensure full implementation of the new right to disconnect provisions
- ensure work requirements do not exceed those set out in government Fact Sheets (see the [NCCD Evidence Fact Sheet](#)).

Parental leave

Independent schools MEAs currently provide that employees are entitled to paid maternity leave or adoption leave of 14 weeks, but the AIS considers this to mean that the period of paid leave does not count as service for other leave (except annual leave) and pay progression. This contrasts with both ACT Catholic systemic and government schools where this period of paid parental leave accrues other leave and pay progression. Also, a total of 12 months parental leave (including the 14 weeks) counts as service for pay progression. In the ACT, employees in Catholic and government schools are entitled to 24 weeks paid parental leave.

A further issue is that the IEU believes that superannuation should be payable on paid parental leave.

Independent schools have also consistently denied access to paid parental leave for the non-initial primary carer (usually the father) who takes on primary childcare responsibility immediately following the birth of their child.

Catholic and government schools provide substantially better paid parental leave to non-initial primary carers who assume the role of primary carer in the first 12 months after birth. They are then entitled to 12 weeks paid leave, in addition to the two weeks of concurrent leave taken at the time of birth or in the first 12 months.

By comparison, independent schools only provide two weeks concurrent leave at or around the time of birth or adoption.

Fair processes

The MEAs should provide fair processes to employees, consistent with 2024 expectations. These include:

- promotions appointments should be merit-based, in accordance with fair documented processes
- the right to disconnect, as required by the *Fair Work Act*
- transparent procedures to apply for flexible work arrangements
- a right to have the Fair Work Commission determine workplace disputes
- workload requirements are set out clearly for all teachers.

Chapter meeting

Please call a chapter meeting at your school to vote on the attached motion and return it to the IEU no later than 24 May 2024. You should invite your IEU Organiser to attend and:

1. Invite all members and non-members to attend. Discuss this NewsExtra and the attached motion.
2. If your school does not have a rep, elect a rep and a chapter committee – it helps to spread the word if you have a union team at your school, preferably involving both teachers and support staff.
3. Encourage your colleagues who have not yet joined the IEU to do so. [Click here to join](#).

It is vital to get maximum possible attendance at the meeting. You may wish to ask any members who cannot attend on the day to send you their vote ahead of time.

Under new provisions of the *Fair Work Act*, union delegates (ie elected IEU reps) have the right to reasonably communicate with union members and employees eligible to be members. **This makes crystal clear your right to talk union business at work.**

